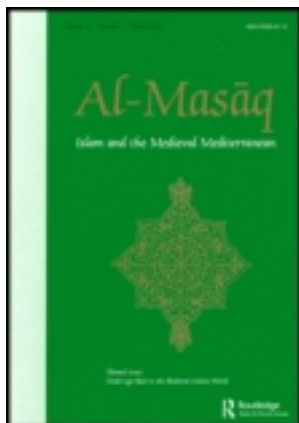


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Music, Tradition, and Cultural Adaptation among the Maronites of Lebanon: The Reform of the Funeral Liturgy

GUILNARD MOUFARREJ

ABSTRACT *The Maronite Church is a branch of the Syro-Antiochean Church and one of the oldest among the Eastern churches. Modernisation, globalisation, emigration, civil war and other factors have together influenced many aspects of local religious expression, but the Maronite Church has succeeded in adapting to the social changes and the spiritual needs of its followers without losing its identity. This is reflected in the Maronite funeral liturgy, which is here examined. I aim to show how the role of music and poetry is perpetuating a sense of communal identity among the members of this religious group, and is creating boundaries with other ethnic and religious groups.*

Keywords: Music and identity; Cultural adaptation; Social change; Tradition; Chant; Syro-Maronite; Maronite Church; Eastern Churches; Roman Catholic Church; Lebanon; Ritual; Funeral liturgy; Liturgical reform

Among the Maronites, a Lebanon-based indigenous Christian community in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, funeral rituals play a central social role. They not only reflect a unique understanding of life and death, but also show an awareness of the richness of the Maronite tradition. Modernisation, globalisation, emigration, civil war (1975–1990) and other factors have together influenced many aspects of local religious expression, but the Maronite Church has succeeded in adapting to the social changes and the spiritual needs of its followers without losing its identity.

This article addresses issues of identity and adaptation in the Maronite Church as reflected in the Maronite funeral liturgy. By examining the recently reformed version of the Maronite funeral liturgy, published in the year 2000, and an older version of 1926, I aim to show how the chants that constitute the bulk of this liturgy have played a crucial role in preserving the self-identity of the church. Furthermore, acknowledging that traditions change in structure, details, and interpretation,¹

Correspondence: Guilnard Moufarrej, 4909 Omar Street, Fremont, CA 94538, USA.
E-mail: guilnar@sbcbglobal.net

¹Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 118.

I argue that changes and adaptations in ritual practices may help to preserve the basic aspects of the ritual.² More generally, this article is concerned with how music and poetry interact with each other and intervene in social events to evoke and perpetuate a sense of communal identity among the members of an ethnic religious group, and to create boundaries with other groups.³

History of the Maronite Church

The Maronite Church is a branch of the Syro-Antiochean Church and one of the oldest among the Eastern churches, dating back to the fifth century. Its name derives from the monastery of *Bayt Marūn* (House of Maron), built during the second half of the fifth century in the valley of the Orontes, near Apameus, in northern Syria. Maronites believe that this monastery, the cradle of their church, was built in honour of Saint Maron (d. 410 AD), an anchorite who lived on a mountain in the vicinity of Apameus.⁴ The austerity of his life and his ability to work miracles made him a celebrity.⁵ His followers took an effective part in the doctrinal discussions of the period. Their activity caused them hardship and led to their persecution by other Christian sects. During the early centuries of Christianity, conflicts over the relationship that unites the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ led to schisms in the Eastern Church. The main controversies that shattered the early Church were Arianism and Monophysitism. In the first, Arius of Alexandria (d. 336) denied the divinity of Christ; he was excommunicated by the councils of Nicaea in 325 and Constantinople in 381. At the latter, Eutychius of Constantinople denied the humanity of Christ, declaring that Jesus of Nazareth was only divine in nature; his followers were known as Monophysites (or Jacobites, after Jacob Baradai, an early proponent of this view). In 451, the Council of Chalcedon condemned Eutychius and his followers and affirmed Jesus Christ to be both true God and true man, with two natures, divine and human. The Maronites were strong supporters of this affirmation of the Council of Chalcedon and their stance put them into conflict with the Monophysites. In 517, 350 monks from the monastery of Saint Maron were

²Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 6–7.

³Martin Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity, and Music” in *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 5.

⁴An anchorite lives in seclusion, usually for religious reasons.

⁵For more information about Saint Maron and the early origins of the Maronites, see Mariam De Ghantuz Cubbe, “Quelques réflexions à propos de l’histoire ancienne de l’église Maronite”, *Parole de l’Orient*, 26 (2001); Pierre Dib, *History of the Maronite Church*, trans. Seely J. Beggiani (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1971); Elias Khalifé-Hachem, “Nushū’ al-kanā’is al-mashriqiyya wa-turāthuhā: al-qarn al-khāmis—al-qarn al-thāmin. al-Kanā’is al-suryāniyyat al-turāth, 3: ‘al-mawārina’” (The Development of the Eastern Churches and their Heritage; from the Fifth to the Eight Centuries. The Churches with the Syriac Heritage, 3: The Maronites) in *al-Masīhiyyah ‘abra tārikhihā fī l-Mashriq*, ed. Habib Badr, Souad Salim and Joseph Abou Nouhra (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2001), pp. 271–289; Paul Naaman, *Théodoret de Cyr et le monastère de Saint Maron: Les origines des Maronites, essai d’histoire et de géographie*, 2nd edn (Kaslik, Lebanon: Université Saint-Esprit, 1987); Bulus Ruhana, *Lamḥa ‘an tārikh al-kanāsa al-mārūniyya* (A Survey of the History of the Maronite Church) (Kaslik, Lebanon: Université Saint-Esprit, 2003); Wadih Peter Tayah, *The Maronites: Roots and Identity* (Glen Allen, VA: Saint Maron Publications, 1987).

massacred on their way to a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Simeon Stylites in the Syrian Desert.

Later persecutions of the Maronites at the hands of their religious adversaries, and the Arab invasion of Syria in 634, forced them to migrate gradually to the inaccessible Lebanese mountains, where they sought refuge and developed as an independent religious community. Although the dispersion of their community reached other places, including the island of Cyprus, the great majority settled in Lebanon. According to historical accounts, their final exodus into Mount Lebanon occurred during the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The Maronite Church is headed by a patriarch and a dozen bishops, and has been in communion with the Roman Catholic Church since at least the thirteenth century. Originally, the monastery of *Bayt Marūn* was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch, one of the five great early patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome). At the beginning of the seventh century, Anastasius II, the Patriarch of Antioch, was murdered. Consecutive Persian and Arab invasions of Syria in 611 and 634, respectively, and further divisions in the Antiochean Church made it quite impossible to elect a new patriarch. A century later, the Maronites chose to have their own patriarch, and elected Maronite bishop, John Maron, as their ecclesiastical leader. It was then, in effect, that the Maronite Church was born. Bulus Ruhana, a Maronite monk and historian, argues that the foundation of the Maronite patriarchate in the monastery of Saint Maron left a substantial imprint on the Maronite Church, which came to be identified as a monastic church, characterised by monastic spirituality and a monastic way of living.⁶

There are two different theories about the beginning of the relationship between the Maronites and Rome: the first holds that the Maronite Church came into communion with the Latin Church during the period of the Crusades (1099–1289/91); the second holds that the Maronite Church has always been a part of the Catholic Church, especially after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Crusades opened the road to Rome for the Maronites, and created the opportunity for frequent comings and goings between these subdivisions of Christianity.⁷ While this contact assured some kind of protection to the Maronites, it started a long period of Latinisation of the Maronite Church. Nevertheless, most of these Latinisations did not become common in Maronite usage until decades and sometimes centuries after they had been introduced. Most of the successful innovations dealt with externals: the wearing of a ring and a mitre by prelates, the manner of making the sign of the cross, the use of bells and unleavened bread, and the introduction of Western devotional customs, such as the praying of the rosary and the enactment of the Stations of the Cross. The Maronite Church's identity, and that part of its heritage which draws from the teachings of the old Syriac Church and the Apostles, remained unaffected.⁸ Indeed, as we shall see below, traditional Maronite chant, transmitted orally throughout the centuries, remained intact until the second half of the twentieth century, when its Syriac texts were translated into Arabic; but even then, the traditional tunes were preserved.

⁶Ruhana, 8.

⁷Dib, 62.

⁸Seely Beggiani, *Aspects of Maronite History* (Glen Allen, VA: Saint Maron Publications, 2003), p. 29.

Currently, the Maronite Church has approximately four million members, about half of whom have emigrated, or descend from those who emigrated, to the Americas and Australia since the 1880s. Despite many years of emigration, the Maronite Church in Lebanon remains the base and the mother church of the Maronites worldwide, who, in return, attempt to preserve their religious heritage while adapting to the culture of their new homelands.

The funeral liturgy

The Maronite funeral ceremony, usually a two-day event, involves various secular and sacred practices. The religious practice of the funeral, which I refer to as the funeral liturgy, consists of five sections, three of which are considered main stations: the service at the home of the deceased (and lately in the church hall), the service at the church (the ritual known as *jinnāz*), and the burial ceremony at the cemetery. The remaining sections consist of the processions that accompany the transfer of the deceased, first from the mortuary room (which may be located in the deceased's house or the church hall) to the church, and then from the church to the cemetery. This structure may have existed since medieval times, as is shown in manuscripts from the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries,⁹ with the service in the church always serving as the core of the ritual.

The funeral service in the church (*jinnāz*) consists of psalms, chants, prayers and Scripture readings. Originally, it was lengthy and complex. As shown in some manuscripts, there was no defined service with a specific structure. In 1585, a new version of the funeral liturgy was promulgated at Rome, with the aim of providing a unified service for all parishes. Today, the same overall structure is still used regarding the order of the hymns, readings, and prayers. The process of simplification and unification seems to have begun as far back as the first contact with the West, during the times of the Crusades, a process which gathered pace until the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Simplification was not the only impulse for such changes, but, as other liturgists postulate, "there was a serious attempt toward identifying the funeral rites with the Divine Office",¹¹ as is seen in the current structure.¹² Nevertheless, the ritual in its fixed and unified structure has undergone revisions throughout the centuries. In 1926, a new edition was prepared and printed in Aleppo, Syria, known as *Ĵinnāzāt Ḥalab* (The Funeral Services of Aleppo). It remained in use in most Maronite parishes until the year 2000, the publication date of a revised and reformed edition. The new edition maintained the fifteenth-century structure, but shortened and modified it to make it more adaptable to present circumstances.

⁹MS Vatican Syriac 59 from the year 1266, and MS Kreim 102 from the year 1480, have rubrics about the entrance to the church and the farewell from the church.

¹⁰Bishop Hector Doueïhi, "The Order of Funerals in the Maronite Church" in *Book of Ginnazat: Order of Christian Funerals According to the Maronite Antiochene Church* (Brooklyn, NY: Diocese of Saint Maron, [1988] 2000), pp. 7–17.

¹¹The Divine Office being the canonical hours of daily prayer (outside the Mass).

¹²Doueïhi, 12.

The reform of the funeral liturgy

The essential structure of the funeral liturgy has persisted throughout the centuries, but its details have repeatedly been subject to revisions to suit the social circumstances in which the members of the Maronite community have lived. During the first half of the twentieth century, Maronite Patriarch Antun Aridah appointed Monsignor Mikhael Rajji to undertake a reform of the liturgy. An important motive for the reform was to increase participation in the prayers to its presumed former level. Jerome Dandini, during his apostolic mission in 1596, had noted the Maronite laity's participation in prayers: he wrote that clergy and lay people gathered at midnight to pray and sing.¹³ Similarly, Jean de la Roque, who visited Lebanon in 1688, witnessed the almost unanimous participation of the faithful in the recitation of the Divine Office:

They do not content themselves with saying long communal prayers at night. They go back to church at midnight because the next day is a Sunday, and they sing the Office in Syriac for two hours. At dawn, they go back to church to continue the Office.¹⁴

In 1938, a Maronite synod was convened to discuss Rajji's work, which was approved unanimously by the Maronite patriarch and bishops. Nevertheless, the reformed liturgy was kept from being put into practice because the Roman Catholic Church did not endorse it; only after Vatican II,¹⁵ which took place from 22 October 1962 to 8 December 1965, was a lasting reform undertaken in the Maronite Church.¹⁶ The Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) prevented the launching of the reform, which was revived during the 1990s, when a commission appointed by the patriarchate (The Patriarchal Commission for Liturgical Affairs) was charged to undertake a reform of the Maronite liturgy, including the funeral liturgy.

Motives for the reform

A major motive for the reform of the funeral liturgy was to remove constraints on language. The hymns were still in Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic (the language spoken by Jesus and his disciples), which prevented non-Syriac-speaking worshippers from participating fully in the prayers. Over time, the role of the community had shifted

¹³Jerome Dandini, *Voyage du Mont Liban* (Paris: n.p., 1675), p. 105.

¹⁴Jean de La Roque, *Voyage de Syrie et du Mont Liban*, volumes I–II (Paris, 1722), I: 205 (author's translation).

¹⁵On 25 January 1959, Pope John XXIII announced the convocation of the twenty-first ecumenical council (popularly called Vatican II) to renew and reform the Roman Catholic Church. Its brief was to emphasise the communal aspects of the liturgy in enhancing lay understanding and participation without weakening its sacramental character. As to funerals, it stated in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: "The rite for the burial of the dead should evidence more clearly the paschal character of Christian death, and should correspond more closely to the circumstances and traditions found in various regions". See Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 162.

¹⁶Before Vatican Council II, the Roman Catholic Church always aimed to unify liturgical practices in all churches that were in communion with it. Therefore, any reform in these churches without the prior consent of the Vatican would be disapproved of, as was the case with the Maronite Church.

from active to passive participation—something that contradicted the main objective of the ritual, which is to accompany the deceased in his new journey to the next life.

The second important motive was the desire to eliminate Roman elements that may have been introduced into or imposed on the Maronite tradition. From the time of the Crusades, the Roman Catholic Church had tried to impose its traditions and practices for two reasons: first, it suspected an inclination among the Maronites towards the Jacobite (Monophysite) rite, a suspicion that subsequently proved to be unfounded; second, it wanted to unify the practice of worship in the Universal Catholic Church, especially after the challenge of the Reformation during the first half of the sixteenth century. Therefore, without questioning the validity of their suspicions and concerns, Roman missionaries tried to replace the Maronite liturgical tradition with the Roman tradition.¹⁷ Nevertheless, according to Father Hani Matar, a liturgist and the general secretary of the Patriarchal Commission, while the Romans succeeded in imposing some aspects of their tradition on the Maronite Mass and other ceremonial events, they failed to influence the Divine Office and other rarely performed rituals, including funerals.¹⁸ Matar saw three reasons behind the failure to Latinise the funeral ritual. First, the length of the ritual and the fact that people used to celebrate it in their homes made it appear to the missionaries as a paraliturgical activity, and therefore seemingly of little importance to them. Second, the idea of accompanying the deceased to the cemetery was natural to the Maronites and implemented in the tradition; thus, it would have been difficult to persuade them to change this practice. Third, since the population of Lebanese villages was smaller than it is today, considerably fewer deaths, and consequently funerals, took place during a typical year. The missionaries put more effort into reforming rituals that were practised more often by the Maronites.¹⁹

Though the funeral ritual remained outside the missionaries' interest, some minor Roman practices were introduced by the students of the Maronite College of Rome,²⁰ who, having been influenced by the teachings of the Roman Church, played a major role in implementing many Roman elements in the Maronite tradition. In the funeral ritual, the main element introduced by the students of the Maronite College was the idea of purgatory, which was disseminated in the Roman Church after the Council of Trent (1545–1563). Since the Maronite College was established in 1584, not long after the Council of Trent, it was quite natural for the Maronite students in Rome to become influenced by this idea.²¹ An Arabic word for *purgatory* (*mathar*) appears in the 1926 Aleppo edition of *Kitāb al-ḥinnāzāt*, whose influence was sporadic: and of course the introduction of this word did not affect the hymns, which continued to be sung in Syriac.

¹⁷The majority of Maronite manuscripts were burned by the Latin missionaries during the sixteenth century.

¹⁸Hani Matar, interviewed by the author at Zouk, Lebanon, 2 July 2003.

¹⁹*Idem*.

²⁰During the sixteenth century, the papacy encouraged young candidates for the priesthood from countries overrun by Protestantism and Islam to come to Rome. This policy aimed at preparing a clerical elite to return to their lands of origin and help maintain the Catholic faith there. In 1582, the Maronite College of Rome was founded for this purpose. It aimed at promoting the study of Semitic languages, educating the Eastern clergy, and fostering ecumenism. Tayah, 65.

²¹Matar, interviewed by the author.

A third motive, and probably the forerunner of the reform, was a series of eleven conferences on Christian funerals, which took place in 1989 at the University of the Holy Spirit, Kaslik, Lebanon. Four of the conference presentations treated the subject of the funerals in the Armenian, Byzantine, Roman, and Syrian churches; the other seven presentations were concerned with Maronite funerals in their anthropological, musicological, theological, liturgical, and practical aspects. The majority of the presenters, each specialising in different fields, addressed various aspects of Maronite funerals and stressed the necessity of going back to the old sources of funerals and adapting them to the present. The conferences were followed by the publication of their proceedings,²² and then by a version of the Maronite funerals for men, women and the faithful departed, prepared in collaboration between the Liturgy Institute and the Musicology Department at the University of the Holy Spirit. This version, which I refer to as the Kaslik version, served as a point of reference for the reform undertaken by the patriarchal commission.

In its work, the commission tried to adapt liturgical practice to today's social and cultural changes without losing its identity and liturgical heritage. It realised this ideal by constantly returning to the old manuscripts and the old liturgical histories and practices and adapting them to present-day sensibilities and requirements. The earliest-known Maronite manuscript of funerals (indeed, the earliest surviving manuscript in Syriac) is MS Vatican Syriac 59, from the year 1266.²³ In addition to this and other manuscripts, the patriarchal commission referred in its reform of the funeral liturgy to the Aleppo edition and to the Kaslik version of the funeral liturgy. As stated in the introduction to the book, the Aleppo edition was prepared in consultation with 23 manuscripts and earlier printed versions of funerals, the oldest of which goes back to 1585. Endorsed by the Maronite patriarchate in 1929, the Aleppo edition served as the official book of funerals in the Maronite Church until the year 2000, when a new version was published by the Maronite patriarchate.

Music, text and preservation of the past

An important challenge that faced the commission was the preservation of the traditional repertory of Maronite chant, still transmitted orally in Syriac, the original language of the Maronites. After the Islamic conquest of Syria in the early seventh century, Arabic gradually replaced Syriac as the common tongue in Syria and Lebanon, but Syriac remained the official language of the Maronite liturgy until around the second half of the twentieth century. The transition from Syriac to Arabic was a long process, during which Arabic was gradually introduced into the liturgy. The early Arabic texts, written in *karshūnī* (Arabic written with Syriac

²²*al-Ḥimmāzāt al-masīḥiyya: silsilat muḥāḍarāt* (Christian Funerals; A Series of Lectures) (Kaslik, Lebanon: University of the Holy Spirit, 1990).

²³The Maronite funeral liturgy consists of distinct funeral services according to the secular or religious status and (or) sex of the deceased. They fall into two main categories: one for the clergy and one for the laity. That for the clergy is subdivided into three: services for patriarchs, bishops, priests and deacons; a service for monks; and one for nuns. Similarly, that for the laity is subdivided into funerals for men, women, boys, and girls. Around the middle of the eighteenth century a service for all the faithful departed was added to the foregoing. The earliest known Maronite manuscript of funerals for lay people is MS Kreim 102 from the year 1480. It contains funeral services for men, women, boys, and girls.



FIGURE 1. An example of *Sūgīto*, Arabic text (note that the music and the text are written right to left).

characters), were a close translation from the original Syriac. These translations were mostly of prose texts, such as prayers and readings, rather than chants with poetic texts. It is difficult to determine the exact date of the introduction of these texts; nevertheless, manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century already contain Scripture readings in which *karshūnī* readings parallel the Syriac readings. Furthermore, from the seventeenth century onwards, chants in Arabic entered the chant repertory. These were either translated from Syriac and adapted to the existing Syriac melodies or newly written. However, they did not replace the traditional chants, which remained in Syriac until the second half of the twentieth century. This situation prevented non-Syriac-speaking worshippers from participating fully in the prayers as their forefathers had done.

Traditional Maronite chants, or Syro-Maronite chants, belong to the most ancient group of chants in the Maronite Church.²⁴ They are strophic, and follow a melody-type system, in which the same tune or melody can be adapted to many strophes having an identical or similar metre. The model strophe, according to which the metre and the melody of the strophes must be regulated, is called *rīsh qolo* (*rīsh* = *rīsho*, “head” and *qolo* means “voice, word, poem” etc.). This term may thus refer to the head of a poem, the model strophe, as with the Greek (*he*)*irmos*. The strophes are usually performed in alternation between the two groups or choirs of the congregation (but some chants have only one strophe—rarely two). The music is made of short formulas juxtaposed with each other; the text is syllabic. The range of the melodies is generally limited to a fourth or fifth, which move mainly in conjunct motion and the tunes can be adapted to other texts in other rituals. The example in Figure 1 is a typical Syro-Maronite chant, a hymn taken from the

²⁴Hage classifies the music repertoire in the Maronite Church into five groups: Syro-Maronite chant, Syro-Maronite-Arabic chant, improvised melodies, personal melodies, and foreign melodies. For more information on these different groups, see Louis Hage, “Maronite Music” in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 6: The Middle East*, ed. Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, and Dwight Reynolds (New York: Routledge, 2002), 207–217, and Louis Hage, *Précis of Maronite Chant* (Kaslik, Lebanon: Université Saint Esprit, 2004).

funeral liturgy.²⁵ It is entitled *Sūgītō*, meaning “to sing”. The term *sūgītō* usually designates an octosyllabic hymn.²⁶

The first attempt to transcribe the chants into Western notation was made in 1899 by the French Benedictine Dom Jean Parisot. His work was followed by a few more transcriptions, aimed not at replacing the oral transmission, but at preserving hymns that were fading from memory or becoming lost because of language barriers. In the 1970s, the Maronite monk and scholar Louis Hage proposed a composite transcription in Western notation based on a comparative study of all previous transcriptions, including one of his own, based on recordings from different Maronite communities in Lebanon. In his transcriptions, he took into consideration the regional variations and different dialects in the interpretation of the chants, as well as their long oral transmission.

The texts of the hymns are ancient; some of them can be traced back to Saint Ephrem, in the fourth century.²⁷ Full of religious symbolism, they unfold as a paraphrasing of Scriptural texts. In the Maronite funeral liturgy, they reflect the main purpose of the ritual—that is, to accompany, as it were, the departed ones on their journey from this ephemeral world to the eternal one. This feature is manifested in the dialogic aspect of the chants, in which the deceased, the community, and God converse back and forth and listen to each other. For example, one of the texts reads:²⁸ “Pray for me that I may be welcomed with mercy before the Lord; for he is the merciful one who took me from you and from this passing world to the world that has no end”.²⁹ Sometimes, the deceased tries to comfort the bereaved family, as in the following: “O my [loved] ones, do not be sad as I depart from you, for the Lord who took me away from you will be your own protection”.³⁰ Similarly, the community converses with the deceased: “Go in the peace of Christ, O sister [or brother]. May the body and blood of our Saviour keep you company”.³¹

Given the central position of the chants in reflecting Maronite theology and identity, the liturgical commission aimed at preserving them in their original form while overcoming the language barrier in order to allow a greater participation by the laity. It benefited from the work by a group of Maronite monks and scholars at the University of the Holy Spirit in Lebanon in the 1970s. In that reform, the words of the hymns were translated from Syriac into Arabic (in the metre of the Syriac) and the tunes retained their melodic form.³² The hymnal of the new version of the funeral liturgy consisted of the original Syriac hymns alongside their Arabic

²⁵ *Kūāb al-ʿjimmāzāt* (The Book of Funerals) (Jounieh, Lebanon: Al-Rusul, 2000), p. 152.

²⁶ As may be seen, the lowest note is *D* and the highest *G*, resulting in the range of a fourth.

²⁷ Hage, *Précis*, 59.

²⁸ These prose translations (unsuitable for singing, as they do not follow the Syriac prosody) aim merely to make the texts understandable by the faithful.

²⁹ *Book of Gimmazat*, 19. The original text may be translated as: “Gracious is the LORD and just; yes, our God is merciful” (Psalm 116:5 – Saint Joseph Edition of the New American Bible).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

³² Guilnard Moufarrej, “The Liturgical Reform of the Maronite Chant”, MA thesis, California State University, East Bay, 1999, pp. 66–79.

اللحن الأول: ككرو	
(الموسيقى: أنظر الملحق الثامن)	
الجوق الأول: هليلويا	الجوق الأول: هلكمما
يا حنان أقبَل مِنَّا	مَجَلًا مَنِّي مَنِّي
هذي الخدمه	هنا هنا
واقبل عبدك، استره	مهلًا حرمي ووجباتي
في ظل الرحمة	مع هنا خلصا
في جوق الصديقين	همنبسي حمر قانا
المرضيين	حمر اوتقا
الصالحين، سامحه	ويسبغهم هليزه ههقمسي
وامنحه النعمه	هوجن ههكمما
عندما تأتي للقضاء	هنا هاتنا حمه حسا ههاتسي
ديان الموتى والأحياء	هفنا ايه هخا مع ختما
أسكنه عن يمينك	مع مفسسي مفسسي اجهسي
يشد نعماك!	هبعهم هبعوا حب.

FIGURE 2. The text of a Maronite funeral hymn in Arabic (left) and Syriac (right). Source: *Kitāb al-Jinnāzāt* (The Book of Funerals), (Jounieh, Lebanon: Al-Rusul, 2000), p. 5.

translations, thus giving the community the choice of performing in either language but to the same melody. In Figure 2, the same hymn is shown in its Syriac and Arabic versions.

Subsequently, similar adaptations for English speakers were undertaken in the United States by the scholar Joseph Amar, and in Australia by Father Geoffrey Abdallah. In addition, the new version included, for the first time, the musical notation of the chants as transcribed by Hage.

Table 1 shows how the texts may be translated into Arabic and English, retaining the Syriac poetic metre: the same number of syllables is maintained in

Table 1. The text of a *Sūgīto* in Syriac, Arabic, and English.

Syriac Version	Arabic Version	English version
Anih, Moryo, nafshē d'abdokh 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	'Arih, yā rabbi, 'abdaka 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Refresh, O Lord, your servant's soul 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
'am qadishē dashfār qudmay'kh. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	bayna l-'abrāri l-ṣāliḥīn 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	with all the saints who please your will. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Bhoy malkūtō malyāt rūbē 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	'Afsih lahu fī mulkika 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	May they rejoice with your elect 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Nerwāz tamōn 'am naṣīhē. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Farrihu bayn-al-zāfirīn. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	at that great feast you set for them. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

both versions.³³ Accordingly, the translations can be adapted to the existing tune, the melodic contours being more or less the same.

Recent adaptation

To adapt the ritual to the changing social and spiritual life of the Maronites, the commission prescribed various modifications, including the elimination of some ancient ideas from the texts and a reduction in the length of the service. As for the texts, ancient ideas no longer understood by the Maronites needed to be eliminated or adapted to the people's changing mentality, for the old ritual texts reflected earlier teachings of the church: these conformed to the social and cultural life of the Maronites of earlier times, but no longer resonated with contemporary society.³⁴ At the same time, a new theology of death was emerging in both the Universal Church and the Maronite Church. God, formerly perceived as fearful and frightening, was now imagined as loving and merciful. Among the antiquated concepts was one from the Semitic tradition: after death, the soul must cross a "river of fire", which delivers the just but burns the evil. The commission also wished to eliminate the notion of the tribulations that the departed soul had to face: armies of darkness and bands of evil spirits blocking the aerial way. This idea, reflecting an ancient conception of the cosmos, which considered the air as being Satan's kingdom, did not conform to dogmas promoted by the Roman Church. Some old texts mention diseases such as the plague which, though still occurring in the modern world, have less significance nowadays in comparison with diseases such as cancer and AIDS. Similarly, old texts featured metaphors about natural disasters that might accompany the second coming of the Lord. According to my respondents, such warnings against possible disasters were a means by which the church persuaded people to cling to God, for safety's sake.

Another recent adaptation involved the funeral service inside the church building: this was because of the increased lay participation in such services, in contrast with the older practices, when the people spent many hours at the house of the deceased. Moreover, the commission prescribed a church service that would not exceed 45 minutes or so, thereby accommodating the pace of modern life. The shortening of the service affected only the number of chants, prayers, and strophes within the chants, but left intact its structure (which goes back to the fifteenth century) regarding the order of prayers, psalms, hymns, and Scripture readings. Table 2 compares the older version (1926) of the *jinnāz* and the most recent (2000) version: the structure of the service has been maintained, but it will be seen that the number of strophes and verses has been reduced. In the older version, the verses of the psalms were sung in alternation with the different strophes of the corresponding chant, unlike the new version, where the psalm is recited after the chant has been sung in its entirety.

³³For the English translation, see Joseph Amar, *Praise and Thanksgiving: Liturgical Music of the Maronite Church* (printed booklet used in US Maronite churches, 1986), p. 37.

³⁴Until the first half of the nineteenth century, Maronite society was composed mostly of peasants; the village priest was usually the only educated person in the area, and he played the role of the teacher and spiritual father of the community. He was called *M'allet* (Master), was highly respected, and his teachings were therefore followed literally.

Table 2. Comparison of the 1926 and 2000 versions of the *jinnāz* for men.

Outline of the <i>jinnāz</i> for men, Bkerke 2000	Outline of the <i>jinnāz</i> for men, Aleppo 1926
Doxology	Doxology
Opening Prayer in Arabic	Opening Prayer in Syriac and Karshūnī
Psalmody	Psalmody
Psalm 51 (8 verses)	Psalm 51
Prayer in Arabic	Prayer in Syriac and Karshūnī
<i>Qolo</i> [tune: <i>Kakro</i> (3 strophes)]	<i>Qolo</i> [tune: <i>Kakro</i> (4 strophes)] alternating with Psalm 102
Psalm 130 (6 verses)	
Prayer in Arabic	Prayer (prayer of the second psalm in Syriac and Karshūnī)
<i>Qolo</i> [tune: <i>Fshīto</i> (3 strophes)]	<i>Qolo</i> [tune: <i>Fshīto</i> (4 strophes)] alternating with Psalm 129
Psalm 112 (6 verses)	
	Prayer (prayer of the third psalm in Syriac and Karshūnī)
<i>Sūgīto</i> [tune: <i>Sūgīto</i> (5 strophes)]	<i>Qolo</i> [tune: L'el men shūfreh (9 strophes)] alternating with Psalm 136
<i>Hūsoyo</i> (prayer of forgiveness)	<i>Sūgīto</i> [tune: <i>Sūgīto</i> (22 strophes)]
<i>Frūmiyyūn</i> in Arabic	<i>Hūsoyo</i> (prayer of forgiveness)
<i>Sedro</i> in Arabic	<i>Frūmiyyūn</i> in Syriac
	<i>Sedro</i> in Syriac
	Same <i>Frūmiyyūn</i> and <i>Sedro</i> in Karshūnī
Hymn of the Incense: <i>Qolo</i> . [tune: <i>Lhūdawi Itqaba'</i> (11 strophes)]	Hymn of the Incense: <i>Qolo</i> . [tune: <i>Lhūdawi Itqaba'</i> (6 strophes)]
' <i>Etro</i> : Prayer of Incense in Arabic	' <i>Etro</i> : Prayer of Incense in Syriac and Karshūnī
Mazmūro (Psalm of the Readings) [tune: Ramremayn (3 strophes)]	<i>Mazmūro</i> (Psalm of the Readings) [tune: Ramremayn (3 strophes)]
Scripture Readings from the New Testament (Epistles, mainly of Saint Paul, in Arabic)	Scripture Readings from the New Testament (the Epistles of Saint Paul, in Karshūnī only)
<i>Fetgōmo</i> (acclamation sung before the Gospel)	<i>Fetgōmo</i> (acclamation sung before the Gospel)
Scripture Readings (the Gospel) in Arabic	Scripture Readings (the Gospel) in Karshūnī only
<i>Bo'ūto</i> (Supplication). [tune: <i>Bo' ūto Morī Ya'qūb</i>] (4 strophes – incipit: <i>Lamtokh'Anih</i>).	<i>Bo'ūto</i> (Supplication). [tune: <i>Bo' ūto Morī Ya'qūb</i>] (4 strophes)
Sprinkling With Holy Water	
<i>Qolo</i> [tune: <i>Tūbayk 'īdto</i> (1 strophe)] sung while the Celebrant sprinkles Holy Water over the coffin.	
Trisagion (<i>Qadishāt Aloho</i>)	
Concluding Prayer	Concluding Prayer (only in Karshūnī)

Earlier and later forms of *jinnāz*

The commission introduced three new elements, all at the end of the service: the Rite of the Sprinkling of Holy Water over the coffin, the *Trisagion*,³⁵ and some spiritual refrains and invocations. Abbot Yuhanna Tabet, a Maronite scholar and member of the liturgical commission, remarks that the Rite of the Sprinkling of Holy Water was part of the original rite that had been removed; therefore, the commission sought to reintegrate it into the service at the church, given its symbolic relevance to the ritual.³⁶ Similarly, spiritual refrains and invocations such as “Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord”, introduced from the usage of the Roman Church, were kept at the end of the service. Bishop Butros Gemayel, the head of the liturgical commission, notes in the introduction to the new version of the *jinnāz* that the commission sought to keep these invocations because “they have been well accepted by the faithful even though they belong to an alien origin”³⁷ and their presence does not affect the essential structure of the ritual.

The newly reformed version of the funeral service has been adopted unanimously by all Maronite churches in compliance with a patriarchal decree (included at the beginning of the new ritual), ordering the book to be used by all Maronite churches in Lebanon and in the diaspora. It has been widely accepted by both clergy and laity. During fieldwork in Lebanon (2002–2003) a priest whom I interviewed noted the importance of preserving the tunes of the traditional chants, while approving of the use of a language (Arabic, in this case) spoken and understood by the faithful. Father Neʿmtallah Khoury from Kfarsghab, a village in northern Lebanon, argued that before the chants were translated into Arabic, people sang them without knowing their meaning: now they understand what they sing.³⁸ Nevertheless, I have observed that the extent of lay participation varies greatly from parish to parish. In some villages in northern Lebanon, where 20 or 30 priests may participate in a funeral, the ritual is almost entirely performed by the clergy, usually divided into two choirs, singing in alternation. In contrast, I was told that in many other places the necessary chants were printed and distributed among the laity, so that they could participate in the ritual.³⁹ The liturgical commission are optimistic that greater participation of the laity will result from their new familiarity with the chants.

Conclusion

The sociologist Stuart Hall distinguishes between two ways of thinking about cultural identity:⁴⁰ the first defines it as “one, shared culture[,] . . . which people

³⁵The *trisagion* (Greek, “thrice-holy”) is a hymn chanted immediately before the Scripture readings in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Christian Divine Liturgy. In the Maronite Church, the *trisagion* is still sung in Syriac; it consists of the following phrase, sung by the celebrant: *Qadīshāt Aloho, Qadīshāt Haylono, Qadīshāt lo Moyuto* (Holy God, Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal One), to which the congregation responds: *Itraham ʿalayn* (Have mercy on us).

³⁶Yuhanna Tabet, interviewed by the author in Kaslik, Lebanon, 24 March 2003.

³⁷Butrus Gemayel, “Introduction” in *Kiṭāb al-jinnāzāt*, 9.

³⁸Neʿmtallah Khoury, interview by the author in Kfarsghab, Lebanon, 22 April 2003.

³⁹Tabet and Matar, in interviews.

⁴⁰Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in *Social theory: Power and Identity in the Global Era*, ed. Roberta Garner (Canada: Broadview Press, 2004), p. 318.

with a shared history and ancestry hold in common”; the second recognises that cultural identity belongs to the future as much as to the past and “Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, . . . [these identities] are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power”.⁴¹ This latter better describes the Maronite understanding of identity, which, although rooted in the past, undergoes repeated transformations.

The recent reform of the funeral liturgy reflects the ambivalence of the church in attempting to preserve the past, while adapting to the present. The latter has been achieved by shortening the length of the service, eliminating ideas surviving from pre-Christian times, and adapting the texts and chants to the vernacular. At the same time, by maintaining the structure of the funeral service inside the church (a liturgical structure that goes back to the fifteenth century), and by retaining the old hymns (which still make up the bulk of the funeral service), it has preserved the form of the ritual, retaining unaltered the order of prayers, psalms, hymns, Scripture readings, and so on. By translating the texts of archaic hymn into Arabic while retaining the Syriac poetic metre, it has preserved the old, orally transmitted, tunes. The church’s approach reflects the anthropologist Roy Rappaport’s definition of the term *adaptation* as “the processes through which living systems of all sorts maintain themselves, or persist, in the face of perturbations, originating in their environments or themselves, through reversible changes in their states, less reversible or irreversible transformations of their structures, or actions eliminating perturbing factors”.⁴² Finally, the survival of the hymns has become the key to the preservation of the identity of the church, thus echoing the arguments of the ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes in favour of the role of music in delimiting cultural and ethnic identities.⁴³

This study has shown that the approach to the notion of tradition, particularly in relation to ritual activities, should take into consideration the problem of continuity and change.⁴⁴ Amongst other elements, as many scholars have maintained,⁴⁵ music has proved to be essential in assuring a sense of identity and continuity with the past.

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⁴¹*Ibid.*, 320.

⁴²Rappaport, 408.

⁴³Stokes, 5.

⁴⁴Bell, 118.

⁴⁵See Kwabena Nketia, “Contextual strategies of inquiry and systematization”, *Ethnomusicology*, 34(1) (1990): 75–97; Helen Rees, *Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Anthony Seeger (ed.), *Why Suyà Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).